



## Governor's Office of Economic Development

State of Utah

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**New Groups to Be Included in Utah Health Exchange's Large Group Pilot Project**  
*Four more large-employer groups will be eligible to participate in early test of the Exchange*

**Salt Lake City** - The Utah Health Exchange (UHE) announced today that four additional companies will participate in the pilot program designed to admit large-employer groups into the Exchange, earlier than originally anticipated.

When established last year, the plan was opened for early testing to small employers, 2-50 individuals. The Utah Health Exchange was not scheduled to admit large employer groups for beta testing until Fall 2011. However, given early success of the Exchange and at the urging of several large group employers, the Governor's Office of Economic Development's Office of Consumer Health Services initiated the early pilot project to accommodate larger Utah employers.

At a Wednesday news conference, Governor Gary R. Herbert announced that RC Willey Home Furnishings, MediConnect Global, Blendtec, and Prosper, Inc. will join Zions Bank, APX Alarm, HealthEquity, Inc. and Spanish Fork City government in the pilot program.

"Utah continues to lead the nation in healthcare reform," Governor Herbert said. "The Utah Health Exchange can serve as a model for other states' reform efforts. We are bringing together government and the private sector to create a system that increases accessibility to health insurance, not to mention transparency and choice."

The input of the seven Utah companies will be crucial to shaping the Utah Health Exchange through ideas and feedback about how the Exchange can best serve Utah's large employers.

"We value our employees and believe the Utah Health Exchange may be a good way to help us give them expanded options in health insurance coverage," said Randy Garn, executive vice-president of Prosper, Inc.

The Exchange allows employers the opportunity to simplify benefits management by offering employees a "defined contribution," or specified amount of pretax dollars set aside for the purchase of an employee-selected health plan from a menu of various plans and prices.



The Exchange also allows employees, rather than employers, to compare and select the plan that works best for their individual needs and circumstances.

“As a company dedicated to empowering people to take control of their own healthcare through better access to their health information, we are encouraged by the commitment of the Utah Health Exchange to provide companies in the state with the information we need in order to determine the best mix of medical benefits for our employees and their families,” said Amy Rees Anderson, CEO of MediConnect Global.

As more employers choose to offer health benefits on a defined contribution basis via the Exchange, increasing numbers of workers will be able to take their coverage with them from job to job. Increased portability means greater continuity of care and a reduction in the number of uninsured.

“The Exchange is a critical component in moving toward a patient-centered, consumer-based system. This improvement in employee centered insurance options will benefit both the employee and the employer in that health insurance costs will be better contained through individual choice,” said Spencer Eccles, executive director of the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, the agency in which the health exchange is being developed. “Business will benefit because of a healthier workforce and the community as a whole will benefit because more people will be insured.”

By state statute, all plans offered through the Exchange must meet federal standards for employer-sponsored coverage. As such, participating employers and their workers can be confident the insurance they choose will be quality coverage from responsible carriers. Furthermore, it is expected the element of consumer choice in this market will put downward pressure on prices and while simultaneous putting upward pressure on quality.

“In addition to our continued efforts to reduce or minimize medical insurance cost increases, RC Willey welcomes the invitation to explore this option to determine the benefits it may provide for our employee and their families,” said Greg Sorensen, Director of Human Resources for RC Willey.

“We are excited to participate in the design of the Utah Health Exchange. Our hope is that opening the choice of health insurance to the employees will lead to a greater understanding of benefits, increased participation, and overall improved health throughout our company”, said Rachael Beal, benefits specialist from Blendtec.

Utah House Speaker David Clark, sponsor of the bill that authorized the pilot said, “The pioneer spirit is alive and well in Utah! We look forward to the ideas and innovation these employers will bring as we begin this phase of the Utah Health Exchange. We invite them to bring their goods to our table and let us add to it.”

Additional information about the Exchange can be found online at [www.exchange.utah.gov](http://www.exchange.utah.gov).

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#### **About the Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development**

The Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED) charter is based on Governor Gary Herbert’s commitment to economic development statewide. The mandate for this office is to provide rich business resources for the creation, growth and recruitment of companies to Utah and to increase tourism and film production in the state. GOED accomplishes this mission through the administration of programs that are based around targeted industries or “economic clusters” that demonstrate the best potential for development. GOED utilizes state resources and private sector contracts to fulfill its mission.